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OCTOBER 2003

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Museum gearing up for seventh annual Austin Town

The sounds of dulcimers, of black powder rifles firing, and of children playing pioneer games will once again be heard in Brazoria County later this month.

Step back in time with the Brazoria County Historical Museum as it presents the Seventh Annual *Austin Town* on Oct. 25 and 26. A historical re-enactment, *Austin Town* recalls and celebrates the lives of those pioneers who settled colonial Texas from 1821 to 1836.

Set just north of Angleton, *Austin Town* typically features character interpreters, craft and skill demonstrators, army and militia drill units, and sutlers, as well as period games, wildlife demonstrations, and a petting zoo. *Austin Town* attendees will have the opportunity to interact with members of the Brazoria Militia and Texas Army. They can watch spinners, tatters, butter churners and even participate in the raffle of a period-style quilt. Blacksmiths, children's games and the always popular General Store are sure to delight and to entertain visitors. Hundreds of volunteers and thousands of visitors flock to this exciting annual historical gathering.

Friday, Oct. 24, is *Austin Town* Field Trip Day and has been set aside for area school children only.

Several school groups already have registered to attend. A teacher who attended the previous *Austin Town* stated that the event pro-

vided an "excellent opportunity for students to step back in time." They loved talking with the characters. We came back to the classroom and even integrated what we had learned into math!"

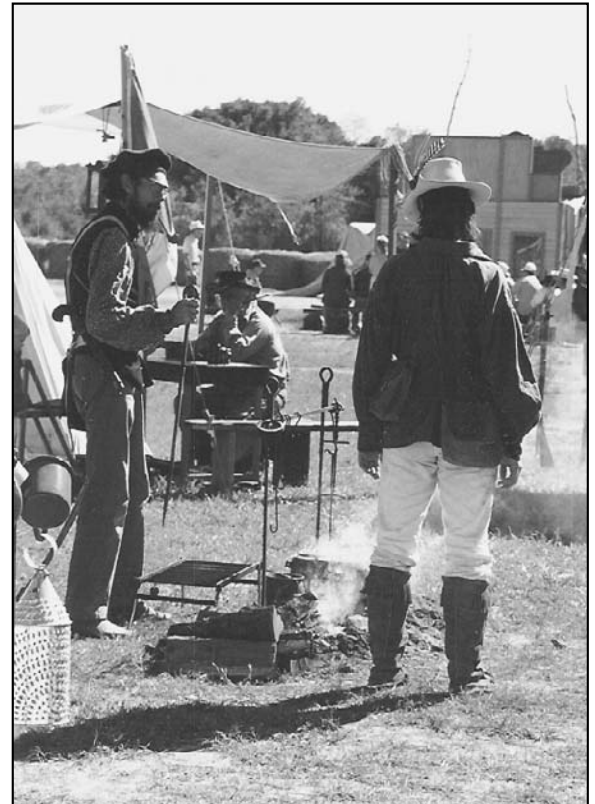
The Staff and Volunteers of the Brazoria County Historical Museum work to provide visitors to *Austin Town* with the opportunity to create an accurate image of the people who called Austin's Colony home. We all can share our heritage by learning more about the many people who shaped Texas into what it is today. *Austin Town* brings to life some of the most exciting history in Texas!

Tickets are \$3 for Children (12 and under) and Senior Citizens (65 and over), and \$5 for Adults.

The gates will open at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 25, and close at 5 p.m. On Sunday, Oct. 26, the gates will open at 10 a.m. and close at 3 p.m. Free parking will be available at the former Intermedics facility. Busses will shuttle attendees the short distance up 288-B to the *Austin Town* site. For more information about *Austin Town*, please contact Ace Filipp at the Museum by telephone at (979)864-1208 or via e-mail at programs@bchm.org.

Imagine the sound of a thunderous cannon boom as the militia is called to muster and seeing Stephen F. Austin, Jane Long, and other historical characters living life as it was in their time...

vided an "excellent opportunity for students to step back in time." *Austin Town* is a valuable teaching resource and provides students with the opportunity to learn about Mexican Texas in a hands-on environment. Students can listen to music, talk with Stephen F. Austin and Jane Long, or play a game of graces. Another Brazoria County teacher who visited *Austin Town* said, "the children commented in their journals that it was the best trip ever.



Interact with the Brazoria Militia and Texas Army.



Experience hands-on how Austin Colony members lived.

Our county's stormy past

The following is a continuation of the storm stories article begun in the August newsletter. The first part of the article covered Giesecke family storm stories for 1900, 1915, and 1949.

By JAMIE MURRAY

Let us back up to 1909.

That must be the year of the storm that occurred when my father's parents lived in the white frame house on Ash Street at the north end of Front Street. The lovely old house is still there, but sadly, the new bypass construction has come much too close to it. In later years it came to be known as the Berger Place after my grandparents moved to another house.

The story goes that one of my relatives was looking out, down Front Street, during the storm. A man was running down the street, pursued by a large wooden cistern that was rolling along behind him. The force of

the wind was so strong that the man could not get out of the path of the cistern, and it was gaining on him. He kept looking back over his shoulder and seeing the cistern getting closer. Just as it seemed he would be flattened by it, the bands that held the cistern together broke, and the wooden planks exploded in all directions and were carried away by the wind. The man survived to witness other storms.

I wish I knew who that man was. Maybe someday, I will run across his version of the story in the files here at the Museum Library! I expect that this adventure etched itself permanently in his memory! Perhaps it is a family storm story of someone reading this article. If so, please call the

Museum Library, and let me know.

I do not recall any stories related to the 1919 Storm, but the one in 1932 was especially devastating to Angleton. By then, my father was 20 and living in the family home at the corner of Locust and Anderson streets in Angleton. The family had gone to Rockport to visit my grandmother's brother there. My father remembers that his grandfather was with them on the trip. This was in a day before there were adequate weather reports to predict impending storms. My great-grandfather took a look at the bay that Saturday morning. It was as flat as a sheet of glass. The wind had

(See Museum Page 2)

Our county's stormy past

(Continued from Museum Page 1)

died, and everything was strangely still. The birds had disappeared. He instructed everyone to pack up and get in the car. He had a strong feeling that a major storm was on the way, and he was right.

The family returned to Angleton and weathered the storm in the house on Locust Street. Either there was no time to put up the shutters or storm shutters were not a common practice then, for the windows blew in as the wind shifted directions during the storm. My dad remembers the wind blowing through the house and causing the swinging door between the dining room and living room to swing wildly. With a burst of adrenaline, he grabbed the piano and moved it over in front of the door to prevent the door from swinging. When the storm ended, he was surprised to find that he could not budge the piano to move it back into its original position.

Cornelius and Emma Giesecke, who had lost their two-story home in Quintana in 1900, also lost their two-story home in Angleton in the 1932 Storm.

As happened with many homes in Angleton during the '32 Storm, the second story was so badly damaged that the house was repaired as a one-story dwelling. One house that I know of, located at 517 Mulberry Street, had the reverse problem. The downstairs was destroyed to the point that it was removed, and the upper story was lowered to become the first floor after 1932. When I was a child I wondered why Angleton had so few two-story houses. The answer was because of the 1932 storm.

My father's younger cousin was 12 years old at the time. She and her parents spent the '32 storm in the home of her grandparents, Emma and Cornelius Giesecke. She recalls that when the storm was over, the family began to salvage what furnishings they could. She looked on in disbelief as sight-seers from Houston drove into town and began loading their cars up with those few items the dazed families had left. Seeing looters operating in broad daylight and with the family members looking on, was an experience she never forgot.

In the days before insurance was common-place, people got wiped out financially time and time again by hurricanes, fires, and floods, yet they managed to start over and keep going. I have wondered about this ability and have found it interesting. It is a good example of the

pioneer spirit that was so important in the development of Brazoria County and which still inspires us today.

The oral histories and memoirs contained in the Museum collections are full of storm stories from other families.

One especially memorable one tells of Nancy Kincheloe Green's experiences in the hurricane of 1854. When her house at Matagorda began to come apart in the storm, she and a servant dug holes on the highest ground and buried her children up to their necks to keep them from blowing away in the high wind. The next morning when the storm was over, the servant found a cooking pot and a piece of bacon in the ruins of her house. With some oysters that the children harvested, they were able to cook "a most enjoyable meal."

One outstanding example of a storm story memoir is that of George Schuster. He was the assistant to Captain Steinhart at the Life Saving Station in Old Velasco. In the Library files, there is a copy of Schuster's hand-written account of his experiences in the 1900, 1909, and 1915 storms. If you want to read an exciting first-hand account of Brazoria County storms, stop by the Adriance Library, and take a look at Mr. Schuster's story.

If your family has storm stories to share, please consider writing them down or putting them on tape and bringing them to the Museum Library. We would appreciate the opportunity to add them to the Adriance Library collection.

By JAMIE MURRAY

Sixteen members of the Cemetery Committee attended the August meeting.

David Roberts has added Cedar Lawn Cemetery to the database, which now has 21,928 entries for 135 cemeteries. The database can be located on David's web site at www.texasgen.org and can also be accessed through a link from the Museum's web site www.bchm.org. David reports there were 1,204 hits on his web site during the past month, and he believes that most of the visits are due to the cemetery database.

Bill Fletcher, co-ordinator for Sandy Point Cemetery, reports that work has resumed on the mausoleum restoration project. Bill and committee member Max Royalty are assisting brick layer Boots Ermis with the restoration. Charles Kruse and Bill are keeping the cemetery mowed. Mr. Viola offered to provide some weed killer and to spray it around the fence line.

Museum Library volunteer Doris Gatton has assembled the Sandy Point photographs into an album, and the plan is to add information about the history of the cemetery and biographical sketches on those who are interred there. Charles Kruse has begun the research, and David Roberts, Melodey Hauch, and Bill Fletcher will assist.

Another donation was added to the fund for purchase of the Sandy Point Cemetery medallion from the Texas Historical Commission. As of Aug. 23, we now have \$200 of the \$250 necessary to purchase the marker. The money collected for

this purpose is being turned over to Marie Beth Jones of the Brazoria County Historical Commission since historical marker placement is a function of the Commission.

An additional \$250 is needed to purchase the cemetery name and date sign to go with the medallion. After some discussion, the Cemetery Committee decided to use the year of the earliest burial at Sandy Point as the date on the sign. David Roberts will check the cemetery database for the earliest burial date. Jamie Murray and Mr. Viola presented suggestions for purchasing a name and date plaque at less expense. Mr. Viola will look at the THC marker sign at Hudgins Cemetery and inquire about prices for a similar plaque available through other sources.

Nancy Howard has received a report from the Texas Department of Transportation regarding the work at Pioneer Cemetery. She will review it and offer suggestions. Sampson Thompson and Mr. Viola are keeping the cemetery mowed. Mr. Viola will talk to Mayor Ken Corley of Brazoria about asking the city to donate an area adjacent to the cemetery where a street has been closed and to create a small parking lot for cemetery visitors.

Edward Wilkes reported that a fence is down at St. Mary's Cemetery. Mr. Viola offered to locate the landowner of that property and try to find out who put up the fence. If he can find no one who will take responsibility for repairing the fence, he will ask if there is any objection to having members of the Cemetery Committee repair it.

Karen Willy Barrow visited the

Museum Library in August with information to share on three cemeteries. Roy Karl will contact her about visiting the Collins Family cemetery.

Jamie Murray has spoken with Mary Whigham, an officer of the Washington County Genealogical Society, regarding the cemetery in Washington County that was brought to our attention by new member Dee Chance.

It is a very old and historical cemetery that is overgrown and needs to be cleaned up. Mrs. Whigham agreed to research the history of the cemetery and to try to organize a local clean-up project. She agreed to let us know the date for a clean-up day so members of this Cemetery Committee might participate. Bill Fletcher suggested that instead of waiting for the Washington County group to organize, set a date, and notify us, we should choose a date to go to Washington County for a clean up day and notify Mrs. Whigham that we are coming. Bill feels that this might "jump start" the process and that receiving this kind of support from the Brazoria County group will encourage the Washington County citizens in their cemetery preservation efforts.

The Committee chose Saturday, Nov. 15, for a clean up day at the old cemetery in Washington County. Members George Easterling, Dee Chance, Alice and Max Royalty, Charles Kruse, Nancy Howard, Traversia Viola, Bill Fletcher, Lou Hunter, Roy Karl, and Debra Bess all indicated an interest in making the trip to Washington County for

(See Museum Page 4)

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Your ad will be mailed to all museum members in addition to being printed in The Bulletin.



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Father of Texas Awards Banquet acclaimed a success

The Brazoria County Historical Museum's *Twenty Years of Museum Memories in 2003: The Eighth Annual Father of Texas Awards Banquet* was held on Saturday, Sept. 29, at Columbia Lakes. Recognized for their contributions in the areas of leadership, pioneer spirit, and literature respectively,

this year's award recipients were Clyde Neal, Sr., Cleo Congrady and James Haley. Family and many friends joined Mr. Neal and Ms. Congrady for an enjoyable evening of conversation, lively bidding on silent auction items, a tasty dinner, and a brief award ceremony. Unfortunately, Mr. Haley was unable

to attend the evening's festivities because of personal illness. Nevertheless, a good time was had by all!

The *Awards Banquet* is the Museum's primary annual fund-raising event. Proceeds support the maintenance of the historic 1897 Courthouse, the Museum's

collections, and educational programming. Many thanks to Museum sponsors and donors without whose support the evening would not have been possible. Thanks go to SAFI Grafix as well for donating the invitation and program design. Additionally, members of the Brazoria County community

are to be commended for their generosity as attendees and auction item purchasers. And finally, the Museum staff and volunteers planned and facilitated a wonderful affair. The Brazoria County Museum truly is a reflection of all of you and your collective efforts. Thank you!

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Top photo: Jim Wiginton (left) presents museum's Pioneer Spirit wardaward to Cleo Congrady. Bottom photo: from left, Mark Neal, Clyde Neal Sr., Dorothy Neal and Clyde Neal Jr. Clyde Neal Sr. received the museum's leadership award.

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The Windows Book and Gift Shoppe

By ROSEMARY DUKE

I am getting ready to move soon. I am moving less than two miles, so it is not a long-distance operation. This has made me think about the early settlers that came across the country to get to Texas.

Maybe they were leaving a large plantation and now could only take a small portion of their most prized possessions. Or maybe they did not have very much to start with, but either way they were forced to decide what to take and what to leave behind. Unless, of course, you were Jared E. Groce, who could afford to bring 50 wagons full of supplies and farm implements, as is stated in *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*.

My family lives in a modest-sized home, however, under no circumstances would my household items fit neatly into one or two covered wagons. I realize pioneers did not have to haul a washer and dryer or a refrigerator; they did not have king- or queen-sized beds either; they did not have a television for each room; and, they did not have

to move a computer. Clothing had to be practical, with most people wearing the same plain garments day after day. Men wore cowhide boots, woolen trousers, a wool shirt, a jacket or vest, and maybe a hat. Some even wore socks. Women wore simple calico dresses and sunbonnets for everyday wear. Not nearly the closet space was needed as the space I have in just one of my bedrooms. As I pack up my dishes, I can either pack them with old newspapers or go to a U-Haul dealer and buy some paper. What did the settlers do? Fine china was packed in sawdust or peanut shells or wrapped in clothing or fine linen.

I can either transport the items in my pantry or use up the food before I move and stock the new house after I move in. The settlers had to bring enough food to make the trip and some extra to sustain them for several months after they reached their destination. I can just run to the store to get my butter and my milk, but not the settler! He had to bring along a cow or two. Marie Beth Jones in her book *Peach Point Plantation* recalls what Stephen F. Austin instructed his mother to bring with her to Texas. Austin asked her to bring all the books they owned, bedding, and all the seeds they had on hand. He also told his mother to pick up seeds of any type along the way. Further, Austin advised her to sell all their furniture and other heavy items. The space utilized by these heavy items would be needed to pack pork, flour and beans. Austin asked her to bring along some

ducks and geese as well and told her to bring as much "linsey" or cotton cloth as she could because it was very expensive in the new colony.

Of course I will move directly into my new home. I will not have to camp out for several months while my new home is being built, nor do I have to help build it! I will

have the power company turn on the electricity and the gas company turn on the gas. I will not have to dig a well or haul the water from the nearest river or stream.

Come into the *Windows Book & Gift Shoppe* and look over some of the excellent books on the life of the early settlers. With the holiday season coming soon, choose some

books for that very special person on your Christmas list! *Windows Book & Gift Shoppe* is open for business Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Museum accepts MasterCard and Visa. If you require something special and are unable to come into the store, call to let us know. We will be happy to ship it to you.

Lone Star Justice

A book review and signing by Robert M. Utley

The Brazoria County Historical Museum will be hosting a book review and signing by Robert M. Utley, author of *Lone Star Justice*.

The review will be held at the Museum located at 100 East Cedar Street in Angleton on Thursday, Nov 6, from 6:30 p.m. until 8 p.m. This program is free and open to the public. For more information or to RSVP, contact Ace Filipp at (979) 864-1208 or via email at programs@bchm.org.

From *The Lone Ranger* to *Lone-some Dove*, the Texas Rangers

have been celebrated in fact and fiction for their daring exploits in bringing justice to the Old West.

In *Lone Star Justice*, Robert Utley, one of the premier historians of the American West, captures the first 100 years of Ranger history in a narrative packed with adventures worthy of Zane Grey or Larry McMurtry. Based on exhaustive research in Texas archives, this is the most authoritative history of the Texas Rangers in over half a century. It will stand alongside other classics of Western history by

Robert Utley – a vivid portrait of the Old West and of the legendary men who kept the law on the lawless frontier.

A former Chief Historian of the National Park Service, Robert Utley is a founding member and former president of the Western History Association as well as is the author of twelve books on Western history. Previous published works include *The Lance and the Shield: The Life of Sitting Bull* and biographies of Billy the Kid and George Armstrong Custer.

Museum opens 'My Home Town' exhibit

The Brazoria County Historical Museum will open a new exhibit entitled *My Home Town* on Friday, Oct. 10.

The exhibit pays homage to many of the small communities that have dotted the Brazoria County landscape over the years. *My Home Town* will be on display for

six months.

Communities with names such as Hasima, Abercrombie, Fruitland, and Bastrop Beach once were scattered throughout Brazoria County. As time passed, many of these small towns vanished and all that remains of them are a few items and images that were

passed down as family heirlooms or as artifacts that have been maintained in the Museum's collections. This latest exhibit tells the stories of many of these forgotten communities as they were and as they appear today with photos and items from the Museum's collections.

New museum members and renewals

La Familia

Eddie Venne, Freeport
Durwood & Becky McKinney, Angleton

El Tejano

Debbie Benedict Smith, Waller
Armando Zapata, Gatesville
Senior
Beverly Clayton, Angleton

Photo request

The Texas Parks and Wildlife restoration project of the Levi Jordan Plantation house is under way. Researchers have been visiting the Adriance Library in search of information and photographs that will be helpful in restoring the house. Anyone who has interior or exterior photographs taken of the house over the years is invited to share them by bringing them to the Museum Library. Scanned copies will be given to the Levi Jordan project researchers, and the originals will be returned to the owner.

Recent Membership Renewals

El General

Mr. & Mrs. J. T. Stratton Brock, Katy
Laura M. Cooper, Arlington
Mr. & Mrs. Dwyer McNeese, Houston
Ruth Anna Munson, Angleton
John & Carlyn Luke Reding, Austin

La Familia

Mr. & Mrs. William G. Baskin, Lake Jackson
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Robert & Jessica Munson, Angleton

El Tejano

Marianne Carter, Angleton
Mary Coburn, Missouri City
Charlene Hurta, Angleton
John C. O'Leary, Lake Jackson
Lela Morris, Lake Jackson
Pat Shell, Lake Jackson

Senior

Betty Blackmon, West Columbia
Nancy Bertoncelj, Angleton
Neil Caldwell, Angleton
Virginia McGee, Houston
Helen Phillips, Angleton
Nancy Smith, Lake Jackson
Lena Joyce Steele, Angleton
Margaret Stewart, Angleton
Mrs. Jack Zylks, Lake Jackson

Correction

The photograph of Robert Glass and his bride that appeared with the August newsletter article about storm stories identified Mrs. Glass as "Rea". Her name was Lilly May Ledbetter Glass. The confusion on the name in the caption evidently came from the mention of their daughter Rae's recollections of the 1900 Storm. In 1900, the Glass Family was living at the Lake Jackson Plantation, where Robert was employed as a carpenter.

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News from the Cemetery Committee

(Continued from Museum Page 2)

the clean up day on Nov. 15. Bill Fletcher and Dee Chance offered to drive their vans and a trailer to transport equipment. Suggestions were made concerning what type of equipment to bring. Lou Hunter will loan a generator so that electrical equipment like saws and weed eaters can be used.

The next meeting of the Cemetery Committee is scheduled for 10 a.m., Oct. 18, in the Museum auditorium. All who are interested in the projects of this group are invited to attend, but attendance at the meetings is not required for membership. Anyone who wants to participate with the work of this Committee can contact Jamie Murray in the Museum library for more information.